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Odell, Joseph Henry

What is the Service citizens of Delaware?

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What is The Service Citizens of Delaware?

REPORT

MADE TO THE

BOARD OF MANAGERS

OF THE

SERVICE CITIZENS OF DELAWARE

JULY 29, 1919

BY

JOSEPH H. ODELL, DIRECTOR

PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE
BOARD OF MANAGERS

June 4 1920 Sun

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What is the Service Citizens of Delaware?

"WHAT is the Service Citizens?" "What is the Service Citizens supposed to do?" "What has the Service Citizens done?" "What purpose has the Service Citizens; is it a secret society, an uplift agency or a political organization?" These questions come not only from people in Delaware but from outside of the State—from newspapers and magazines, from agencies engaged in efforts to enhance human values and from individuals who are seeking guidance as to the best methods of discovering and utilizing the assets which lie latent in American life. Whatever the source or motive of the questions they should have a simple and direct answer.

Birth of the Service Citizens

For a score or more of years men and women in every part of the country have been organizing in various ways to realize the rich promise of American life. The war reached deep into the motives and volitional forces of the nation and uncovered resources which otherwise might have been hidden indefinitely. While we were assaying and mobilizing our reserves for a death grapple with what we believed to be threatening our most cherished ideals we found that we had made no very serious attempt to make our ideals concrete at home; there were possibilities in Democracy which we ourselves had never enjoyed, there were also forces in our own nation which threatened to strangle the very ideals which we were making such an heroic effort to save on distant battlefields. A number of men and women, quickened into new hope and faith and courage by the war, all residents of Delaware, all anxious to serve the people of their State, organized the Service Citizens

July 23rd, 1918. Their general purpose and aim was to do what they could to make Delaware the ideal state in all such vital matters as public health, education, Americanization, community development. They were men and women of many and varied religious affiliations; they belonged to different political parties; they hailed from the city, the town, the village and the open country; they represented scores of occupations — lawyers, clergymen, doctors, manufacturers, merchants, skilled mechanics, farmers, and so forth. They were not bent upon advancing the interests of any political party or clique, they had no thought of proselyting in the name of church or creed; they sought no financial gain for themselves or their friends;—they came together to help make Delaware a healthier, happier, sweeter and more prosperous place in which to live. The aims and objects of the Service Citizens, as stated in the Constitution adopted at that first meeting, will be found as an appendix to this pamphlet.

Early Adjustments

The history of the early months of the Service Citizens may seem a trifle confused because it first blends with and then takes over and carries forward some of the work of two other organizations, viz: the General Service Board and the Delaware State Council of Defense. If this record fails to give a full account of all that those two agencies accomplished it will not be for want of appreciation, but because, in telling briefly the story of the Service Citizens, our attention must be confined to those enterprises which concern chiefly our own Society.

For several years the General Service Board, with Miss Jeannette Eckman as executive, had been carrying on a laudable effort to interest and guide the people of the State in many things essential to the well-being of a modern Commonwealth. The Executive Committee, the membership, the offices and equipment, and the records of the General Service Board were taken over by the new organization and it is therefore im-

possible to say where the work of the one ended and the other began.

Reference Bureau

For example, the Service Citizens has continued and supplemented the valuable Reference Bureau begun by the General Service Board. This covers several years and includes (for that period) a complete civic record of the State, newspaper clippings on all matters of public interest and importance, editorial comment on state and municipal affairs, accounts of meetings of public bodies and private organizations, press records of the sessions of the legislature, files of certain law violations, accidents to children in the streets, industrial accidents, fires, new industries, menaces to public health and innumerable other subjects which concern the development of Delaware. This Bureau, with the assistance of those in charge, is always at the service of any responsible individual or group who may wish to use it. It is kept up-to-date and every day it is drawn upon for information which cannot be found in available form elsewhere.

During the latter part of 1918 and in the opening months of 1919 the work of the Service Citizens was necessarily quite closely related to the activities of the State Council of Defense and the Woman's Committee. Our officers and equipment, with our trained and enthusiastic staff, were always at their disposal. War work of immeasurable significance was being done and like every other patriotic organization the Service Citizens threw its strength and resources wherever needed. And some of the plans and enterprises of the State Council of Defense, which suspended many of its functions early in the new year, had to be taken up and carried forward by the Service Citizens or valuable ground already gained at much cost would have been lost.

Survey of State Government

It is of first importance that a state should know itself politically. This is by no means easy. In the course of years, as each succeeding legislature adds new functions to the gov-

ernment, political forms grow numerous and complex. Delaware had been growing an increasingly intricate form of administration for an indefinte period, until the State seemed to be covered with a net-work of confused and confusing governmental agencies. At the instigation of the State Council of Defense an extensive and scientific survey was made of the State by the New York Bureau of Municipal Research, the cost being borne by the Service Citizens. The findings of this Survey were laid before the Legislature of 1919. Governor Townsend was authorized and empowered to appoint a Commission which should spend the next two years in studying the conditions disclosed, and report its conclusions, with recommendations, to the next session of the Legislature. Mr. Clarence C. Killen, the Chairman of the Commission, has asked for a consulting committee of the Service Citizens, which has been appointed.

AMERICANIZATION

When the United States entered the war in 1917 our efforts toward a swift and conclusive participation in the struggle were hindered by the mass of unassimilated aliens which formed a considerable part of our population. It was this situation that forced the problem of Americanization upon Federal, State and Municipal authorities. But entirely apart from war preparedness there were other considerations which made it imperative that steps should be taken to make our non-English speaking residents a participating element in national and social life. Industrial accidents were prevalent where the employees could not understand the orders or read the printed signs necessary to a safe conduct of business. And, also, even if the alien population could not be converted immediately and completely to American ideals and institutions it was still the wise and proper course that they should at least understand them. In every large community there were groups of people who misinterpreted and misjudged us and whom we misinterpreted and misjudged. Such a condition does not make for a happy and prosperous community life. So the Delaware State Council of Defense undertook the work

of Americanization in a wise and enthusiastic manner. Miss Esther E. Lape, known throughout the nation for her thorough understanding of the problem, was engaged to study the Delaware situation. Her report, published under the title, "Americanization in Delaware" attracted wide attention and formed the foundation upon which all the work in the State was conducted. As the State Council of Defense was about to pass out of existence with the cessation of hostilities it was necessary that some organization should take over its plans and responsibilities. This was done by the Service Citizens. It was believed that if a successful demonstration could be made the Delaware Legislature would provide the funds for future operations, as many other State Legislatures were doing.

But Americanization classes could not have been started without a trained corps of teachers; the methods used in the classrooms of day schools, with native born juvenile pupils, are not adapted to the teaching of adult foreigners. Fortunately, the State Council of Defense had held an Institute and a group of trained and enthusiastic young women, with a few men, were ready for the task. From January to the middle of June, 1919, the Service Citizens was responsible for the Americanization program in Wilmington. Miss Helen Hart as Executive Secretary and Miss Marguerite Burnett as Supervisor carried the work forward with rare spirit and discretion.

A publicity campaign among the non-English speaking people of the City brought 954 pupils into the classes for instruction in English and Citizenship. About half of the classes were held in the public schools and the rest were housed, rent free, by private organizations. A house, formerly used by the Federal Employment Bureau was rented for day classes conducted for night workers and was also of value for special recreational work. In this latter enterprise we had the cooperation of the Wilmington Community Service. What has been accomplished by these efforts? Of course, the full benefits to the pupils can never be measured but there are certain well-ascertained results which may be recorded. Hundreds of adult foreigners have been taught sufficient English to make them intelligible to their employers and neighbors and to open the

way for happier and freer participation in community life; they have absorbed some of the spirit and ideals of America at its best, they have learned to understand the broad purposes of our laws and institutions, and they have discovered that the American people are animated by a spirit of friendship toward them. As a direct result over 125 members of these classes have been helped in making their declaration to become American Citizens and 96 of these were presented with their first papers at special patriotic exercises held in the Wilmington High School Auditorium, March 27th, 1919. In many other ways we have been of help to these strangers in a strange land. Many who have been cut off from their relatives in the old country have been brought into touch with the Communication Bureau of the Red Cross and through that agency they will re-establish the ties of affection broken by the war. The employers of these foreigners receive a monthly report of their attendance and progress, and eight of these firms have contributed toward meeting the cost of teaching their men. On June 13 Americanization Commencement Exercises were held in the Wilmington High School. The gathering was significant and inspiring as hundreds of these men marched into the auditorium with their national flags and transparencies indicating the class in which they had studied. They sang the songs of their homeland by groups and then all together they saluted the Stars and Stripes, repeating the pledge of allegiance, and then, with ardor and radiant joy, sang the "Star Spangled Banner." Seventeen nationalities were represented, 300 diplomas and 160 certificates were presented as rewards for proficiency. Most of them, for the first time since coming to this country, felt that America really cared for them and they responded gladly and gratefully to the approach of friendship.

State Takes Over Classes

Thus the experiment in Americanization proved to be a demonstration which could not be ignored. When the nationalistic groups of Wilmington presented a bill for the consideration of the Delaware Legislature asking for an annual

appropriation of $15,000 the response was prompt and ungrudging. Our evening classes have been turned over, under the provisions of this law, to the State Board of Education, with Miss Burnett as Supervisor. But growing out of our experiment was the conviction that the classes for English and Citizenship do not and cannot fully meet the situation and that the Service Citizens should undertake certain supplementary work. On July 6th a budget for two years was adopted and Miss Hart retained as Executive Secretary. The effort of the next two years will have as its chief objects the strengthening of the pedagogic work of the educational authorities. The homes will be visited and pupils encouraged in their studies, a program will be laid out for reaching the women as well as the men, special literature will be provided for use in the evening classes—such as a book giving information in simple form about Wilmington and Delaware, about the history and laws and government of the United States, about the rights and privileges of citizenship. By thus supplementing the effort of the state authorities, always in cooperation with those authorities and never in rivalry, we expect to conduct a notable experiment during the next two years which should have considerable influence in solving the nation-wide problem.

Health Bureau

Highly developed educational facilities, improved means of transportation, productive industries and farm lands, modern and efficient forms of public administration, are of little permanent value if the health of the people is allowed to deteriorate. Careful investigation by competent authorities, undertaken in 1918, revealed conditions in Delaware which were alarming. The State itself did not know the truth owing to an imperfect registration and tabulation of vital statistics. And Delaware was a black sheep among the states of the Union for the same reason. Something immediate had to be done and the State Council of Defense engaged a recognized expert in public health and sanitation, Mr. Chester H. Wells, as consultant and guide. But hardly had Mr. Wells begun his

work when the State Council of Defense relinquished some of its activities. On April 22nd the Service Citizens established a Public Health Bureau and took Mr. Wells as its executive. As in other instances this Bureau does not operate as a rival to any official authority but it seeks only to assist and supplement upon the invitation of regularly constituted health officials or bodies. Among other things accomplished by this cooperation have been: new rules and regulations and report forms for local boards of health, vital statistics regulations for physicians, midwives, undertakers and registrars, redrafting of milk regulations, a systematic campaign against venereal diseases by education and with the assistance of physicians, cooperation with the United States Public Health Service in curbing and eradicating communicable diseases. These are simply sufficient to indicate the nature of Mr. Wells' activities; any fuller report would of necessity be technical and of interest only to medical and health experts.

HOUSING

No one yet knows the extent of the bad housing conditions in Wilmington but enough has been ascertained to alarm and discourage those who hope for decent living conditions in a modern and prosperous American city. Our crowded and unsanitary tenements were undoubtedly responsible for the terrible spread of Spanish influenza in the autumn of 1918. The Central Labor Union of Wilmington had information on the subject and had investigated the Octavia Hill Housing Association as a means of mitigating the ill conditions in a slight degree. The Octavia Hill Housing Association was first formed in England half a century ago for the purpose of turning poor tenements into decent and sanitary homes for people of the laboring class. It was not a charity and set itself resolutely against pauperizing or patronizing those who benefitted by its program. More than twenty years ago a few men and women incorporated a similar movement in Philadelphia known as the Octavia Hill Association of Philadelphia. This society has acquired considerable property, rebuilt it to conform to the best sanitary standards and rented it on terms

which have netted a dividend of 4 per cent a year to the stockholders for the past twenty years. The Health and Police authorities of Philadelphia have paid high tribute to the practical value of the movement. Having heard a special report on the subject from one of its number the Wilmington Central Labor Union appointed a committee to continue the investigations and procure action if such were desirable and possible. The Central Labor Union asked the Service Citizens to appoint a similar committee for joint conference and action. These committees are now working together with the prospect of accomplishing some very beneficial results. Progress may be slow owing to the immensity of the problem to be attacked and the necessity of proceeding on a sound economic basis, but undoubtedly the combined committees are moving in the right direction, and there is hope that some of the worst features of the dangerous and desperate housing situation in Wilmington may be removed.

DELAWARE'S SCHOOLS

A very large proportion of the time and thought and money of the Service Citizens has necessarily been devoted to education during the past year. This must appear inevitable to anyone who has read or studied the survey of educational conditions as made and published by the General Education Board in 1918. Delaware stands thirty-third among the states of the Union in education and under the old school laws there was slight prospect of improvement. Those among our citizens who know that the future of an American Commonwealth depends upon the educational facilities given to the children were filled with shame and foreboding. They saw Delaware boys and girls growing into manhood and womanhood forced to compete with the citizens of other states who were better trained and equipped, they knew that as a consequence our local sources of wealth would diminish while those of our neighbors would increase, they saw the possibility of less intelligence in government and a contraction of the qualities that make for personal happiness and social well-being.

Fortunately, the School Code presented by the State Educational Commission was passed by the 1919 Legislature. This law marks a new era in the life of Delaware. The code is not an experiment, except as applied to this state. Its provisions have all been proved to be practical and satisfactory in other parts of America. Indeed, the most successful features of other state laws are brought together for the benefit of Delaware and our Code is already spoken of with high approbation by educationalists of national standing. But, the better the law the more difficult to put into effect. It was the task of putting the New Code into effect in such a way that the State would be able to get the maximum of advantage from it in the shortest possible time that led the Service Citizens into its extensive educational program.

Summer School for Teachers

However good the School Code may be as an instrument, the value of what it can provide for Delaware—for the children of today and the citizens of tomorrow—must depend upon the quality and the qualifications of the teachers. The State had appropriated $4000 for the Summer School for Teachers to be held at Delaware College from June 30th to August 6th. This amount was sufficient, but only just sufficient, to ensure the teaching of the required pedagogic subjects, but not enough to provide adequate inspiration just when the need was greatest. For their tasks under the New Code they required enlarged vision and an accession of enthusiasm. The work of the teacher, particularly in rural districts, is lonely and exacting and she must draw upon her own heart and mind for the courage, patience and stimulus needed all through the year. In view of this the Service Citizens decided to make it possible for the Summer School to have a board of lecturers of national standing and influence, men and women who could bring to the teachers messages at once illuminating and inspiring and who would help them to conceive of the work in this State as a magnificent opportunity. Funds for these lecturers were provided by the Service Citizens

while the state money was used for the purpose for which it was appropriated. First of all, the meaning of the New Code, and also the broader and deeper meaning of education, were explained by Professor George D. Strayer of Columbia University, Dr. John H. Finley, Commissioner of Education for the State of New York, Dr. Frank Bachman of the General Education Board. Instructive lectures and addresses on State and governmental matters were given by Dr. Charles A. Beard and Chester C. Maxey of the New York Bureau of Municipal Research. Dr. Newell Dwight Hillis, the famous preacher and publicist, lectured on "John Ruskin" and "Rebuilding the Ruined Lands of Europe"; Henry Robinson Palmer, of the Editorial Board of the Providence Journal, historian and poet, spoke of "The Place of the Newspaper in Modern Education"; Dr. Russell H. Conwell of Philadelphia, gave his celebrated lecture on "Acres of Diamonds"; W. W. Ellsworth, President of the Century Company, lectured on "Theodore Roosevelt, American"; Professor Charles Upson Clarke, of the American Academy at Rome gave two lectures, "Where War Began" and "With Italy at War"; Professor Charles Seymour, Professor of Modern History, Yale University, and a member of the Boundaries Commission of the Paris Peace Conference, who recently returned with President Wilson, gave three important lectures dealing with the Treaty of Peace; Miss Eliza Kellas, President of the Russell Sage College, held sessions for intimate conference with the teachers on the nature and opportunities of their work; Mrs. Salo Friedewald, in a series of readings, interpreted the masterpieces of modern literature.

These distinguished men and women lifted the Summer School far above the rut of routine and made it a memorable event. Influence gathered there may be expected to radiate through Delaware for many years to come. The Service Citizens arranged that a wide publicity should be given to the substance of these lectures in the daily and weekly newspapers of Delaware and neighboring States.

Scholarships for Prospective Teachers

While trying to enhance the quality of the teachers already engaged, Delaware must also face the question of obtaining an adequate supply for future demands. At present we are faced by the prospect of a serious shortage. This state has as its first duty the development of a steady stream of well-trained teachers. These cannot be obtained from other states nor should it be necessary to go beyond our own borders. Under the New Code remuneration will be more liberal and there is ample good material if we have the training facilities. In the past we have had no normal school for such white teachers as we have needed for the rural schools. Three friends of education in Delaware, when this situation was brought to their attention by the Service Citizens, immediately contributed the amount necessary to establish sixty scholarships of $125 a year for two years, for the purpose of aiding young women of the state in receiving training necessary for the teaching profession. These scholarships are being awarded by the State Commissioner of Education and by the authorities of Delaware College.

Training Teachers

After the scholarships were secured it was found that the combined colleges at Newark had neither the faculty nor the equipment for the work. As the appropriations for the colleges were made by the legislature prior to the passage of the Code this urgent need had not been foreseen. Sufficient money for these pre-requisites for two years was voted by the Service Citizens and turned over to the Trustees of Delaware College, who will maintain the Teacher's Training Department as a regular part of the College and with no relationship whatever to the Service Citizens. There can be little doubt, in view of the urgent requirements of a sound educational policy, that the state will provide for the Department in years to come.

The P. S. du Pont Trust Fund

Attention was first called to the condition of the physical property of our educational system by the survey of the

General Education Board made in 1918. Many of the school buildings are legacies from a far distant past when educationalists had no idea of the requirements for light, heat, ventilation, sanitation and fire danger. Some of these are places of positive menace to the health and life of the children. Most of the buildings are inadequate when judged by modern standards. Almost all of them are capable of decided improvement. In a word: practically the entire physical system of Delaware public schools needs to be overhauled, and unfortunately a large part, probably two thirds of it, must be entirely re-built. Such a program is an exceedingly heavy one for a state to undertake. These conditions, later verified by evidence secured by the educational authorities of Columbia University, were brought to the attention of Mr. Pierre S. du Pont, who had accepted an appointment by Governor Townsend to a place on the State Board of Education. Mr. du Pont met the situation by creating a trust fund, the interest of which, to the amount of $2,000,000, shall be devoted to assisting in school construction in Delaware. Under the terms of the Deed of Trust, the Service Citizens is called upon to appoint a committee of its members to distribute the trust fund subject to the conditions named. The Executive Committee on July 15, 1919, duly appointed the three Vice-Presidents of the Service Citizens, Mr. Henry P. Scott of New Castle County, Mr. Henry Ridgely of Kent County, and Dr. Rowland G. Paynter of Sussex County, together with Mrs. W. K. duPont of Wilmington and Dr. Joseph H. Odell to be the said committee.

The purpose of this gift is to enable Delaware to have a school system which shall exemplify the scientific principles of modern construction—buildings which shall not only be safe and sanitary but which shall express the pre-eminence that education must have in the life of a democratic people. It has been estimated that between five and six million dollars would give Delaware a complete and beautiful school for every district and these to be not simply places where the children learn the rudiments but genuine community centers where the people of the community or country-side may meet in a building which belongs to all alike and in which each has an in-

alienable right. If the people of Delaware will elect to spend between three and four dollars for every two which the du Pont Trust Fund makes available this can easily be brought to pass and this State will lead in the new functions of modern education. It is within the discretion of the Service Citizens' Educational Committee to make grants for school-building projects up to the point of fifty per cent of the total cost and quite naturally those districts will be most favored which elect to build the most adequate plant. This holds true of projects for schools for colored children as it does for those of white children. It is not the purpose of the fund to assist a community which tries to evade its full responsibility by assessing itself for less than it would if the fund had not been operative. Therefore the work of this Committee will consist of gaining an intimate understanding of the needs of each school district, conferring sympathetically and encouragingly with each local board, cooperating in a large way with the County and State Boards and of assisting each enterprise, not only by the financial grant, but by procuring such expert counsel upon the individual problems as may be needed and desired.

No other state has such a supplementary fund and perhaps no organization in America has such an opportunity for rendering genuine aid to primary and secondary education as has the Service Citizens in its administration.

Spirit of the Service Citizens

This work which the Service Citizens is doing in Civics, Americanization, Health, Housing and Education is the best indication of its purpose.

In these matters, as in all others, the Service Citizens has no desire to usurp any authority nor to invade any field already covered by any public or private organization; but, guided by such scientific assistance as may be procurable, to cooperate as large-heartedly as possible in every enterprise which looks toward the improvement of vital conditions in Delaware.

We ask nothing beyond the honor of being permitted to serve with others in making Delaware all that we believe it may be in our moments of clearest vision, all that we believe it will be in our hours of brightest hope.

Appendix

Article I

The name of the Society shall be the "Service Citizens of Delaware."

Article II

The purpose of the Society is to work for the improvement of social conditions in the State of Delaware. In seeking to accomplish this purpose the Society purposes:

A. To obtain, through properly qualified agents, such exact knowledge as to existing conditions as may be necessary as a basis for remedial action.

B. To urge and promote the adoption of measures for improvement which are shown to be desirable as the result of investigation, or by the experience and studies of other persons and organizations in Delaware and elsewhere.

C. To bring conditions and remedies to the attention of the citizens of the State by means of addresses, reports, newspaper articles, and other suitable instruments of publicity.

D. To make, where feasible, demonstrations of improved methods of bettering social conditions in the State of Delaware, as well as of controlling conditions prejudicial to social welfare.

E. To promote full and cordial cooperation among organizations and agencies, public and private, engaged in social welfare work in Delaware.

F. To promote such other proper measures as will, in the opinion of its members, contribute to the fulfilment of the purpose for which the Society is established.

The activities of the Society shall extend throughout the State of Delaware.

The Society does not propose to engage in work that can best be done by the State, counties, or other municipal organizations, or by existing social agencies, but rather to acquaint the public with the situation which exists and with the means available for its ameliora-

tion, and to urge prompt and effective remedial action by the whole body of citizens.

Article III

Any citizen of the State of Delaware, twenty-one years of age or more, approving the Constitution and By-Laws, may become a member of the Society when elected by the Board of Managers, or by a Committee of the Board clothed with the power of such election, and upon payment of an initiation fee of One Dollar.

The following public officials shall be honorary members of the Society:

The Governor of Delaware.

The President of the governing body of each County of the State.

The Mayor or Chief Magistrate of every incorporated City or Town in the State.

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